

5 January 1956

Memorandum for SA/PC/DCI

Subject: O/NE Comments on Draft Bissell Memo of 23 December 1955 on  
Coordination of Requirements

1. In our view, the attached report does not adequately fulfill the mission assigned in IAC-D-50/5, i.e. to "review the existing provisions for the development and coordination of information requirements and collection tasks" in conformity with the PNIO's. What the report amounts to in essence is some philosophizing on the requirements problem and a conclusion that the existing machinery is adequate, which is supported mainly by the avowals of other agency collection representatives that this is so.

2. The requirements problem is one of the most perennially difficult nuts to crack in the whole intelligence process and it is no wonder that SA/PC/DCI was unable to come up with a simple new solution to it. But is it enough to write a report which really covers only one aspect of the whole requirements problem, that of interagency coordination, and which (we suspect largely under inter-agency political pressures) confines itself to a bland conclusion that the coordination machinery is adequate?

3. We would not contend that any new over-all machinery is necessarily required to meet requirements needs, but even if the present machinery is judged to be theoretically adequate, is this present machinery now operating at satisfactory efficiency? This key question is not satisfactorily treated in the report.

4. The Report does not really clarify what happens after the PNIO's are published, i.e. who, if anyone, takes action to break them down into more refined categories; who checks to see whether they are actually being covered by existing collection; what machinery, if any, acts to fill the gaps; what mechanism there is for evaluation of action taken; etc. The facts as we understand them are these:


a. Each year the Board and IAC agencies revise the list of PNIO's. These are published as over-all guidance on the direction our intelligence efforts should take to meet national security needs.

b. At least two groups have taken the PNIO's and broken them down into priority objectives in their fields. What is then done to translate these into general or explicit collection guidance, we do not know, nor does the report tell us.

c. Aside from the two cases above, we apparently rely on existing departmental (or CIA) collection administrators to review the PNIO's, determine to what extent our collection programs meet them, and take appropriate action if necessary. It is not at all clear from the report whether this is actually done.

5. In other words, we still have no clear understanding of what is done to translate PNIO's into "information requirements and collection tasks." Is this being done adequately or is it not? The problem is not simply one of coordination or machinery; indeed it seems to us that the examination of these two questions properly follows rather than precedes an examination of whether requirements are in practice being substantively handled in adequate conformity with PNIO's.

6. O/NE's interest in this matter is indirect, because we are not ourselves in the requirements business, but we nevertheless have a strong interest in anything which contributes to a stronger intelligence base for our NIE's. We have long suspected that requirements is one of the weakest links in the whole intelligence process. If this is so, we think it very dangerous for the DCI to issue a report which by tone and content implies that the requirements machinery is really rocking along pretty well.

  
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